Synopsis

Joycean Style in *Ulysses* as Minority Discourse:

A Critical Analysis of 'Oxen of the Sun'

Until recently, almost all discussions on James Joyce were mostly of the canonized Joyce: the great modernist writer whose stylistic and aesthetic innovations revolutionized modern prose style but who supposedly remained steadfastly apolitical. My attempt is to interpret the fourteenth chapter 'Oxen of the Sun' of *Ulysses* for its stylistic evolution and the orientation of the same text to express bitter resentment towards the imperia of the State, the Church and other colonial institutions. I wish to argue that as the literary tradition of Shakespeare and Milton often represented for Joyce the imperial tradition of the English oppressor, he was deprived of valuable artistic models to emulate. Therefore, many of the revolutionary innovations of Joyce's style, linguistic and literary craft may be seen to be grounded in his sense of ideological, ethnic and colonial dispossession.

In *Ulysses*, for example, the narrative in its cultural specificity and detailed historicity voices all the diverse discourses and ideological positions of 1904 Dublin. In its precision of concrete detail and specific representation - each person, each street, each building drawn in such particularized detail, distinct and different, so as to avoid the 'the narrative of national cohesions signified by "the many as one"' (Cheng 1995 64) - it attempts to avoid the homogenizing of difference. In its presentation of analogies and similarities between those differences and peoples, it suggests possible lines of solidarity and refutes the binary essentialisms of absolute difference. It is thus both universal and particular at the same time, allowing for solidarity/likeness while accepting and respecting heterogeneous difference; it is at

once the most materially specific and the most analogically universal work imaginable--covering Ireland both vertically and horizontally in its dialogical re-presentation of the conscience of a race as a pluralistic contact zone. Thus, it illustrates what Abdul JanMohamed and David Lloyd term as “minority discourse” (1990 1-16).

In the chapter “Oxen of the Sun” of *Ulysses*, Joyce brought the concept of evolution (‘ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny’) to bear upon his stupendous enterprise of recapitulating the well-known and significant prose styles of nearly seventy writers. Every style Joyce imitates undergoes an internal alteration. The externals – rhythm, sentence length, clause, structure, turn of phrase, vocabulary, mannerism, and rhetorical qualities like epigrams, paradoxes and alliterations – are maintained. But the content is not typical of the original writer. To give one instance, Lamb’s style is used to recall Bloom’s first encounter with a child streetwalker, which takes place with the approaching footsteps of the policeman on patrol. This biological change of form, takes place in the interest of efficiency or efficacy.

We find trenchant analysis and potent critique of discursive constructs like race, ethnicity, imperialism, colonialism and the status of power as posited by the English in the prevalent discourses (scientific, cultural, political, literary and artistic) of the time, and of Joyce’s negotiations between binary positions and racialization.

The Thesis will have the following chapters:

Chapter 1- Oxen of the Sun and Minority Discourse-An Introduction captures the movements of Bloom, Stephen and other ‘oxen’ in the episode in a nutshell, Joyce’s scheme of the episode, traces the important critical thoughts on the political Joyce contained in the literature of Joycean scholars over two decades and attempts to analyse the character and content of Joyce's politics to conclude that it

portrays colonial resistances as claimed in some recent theories. The chapter also states that the styles parodied in the 'Oxen of the Sun' episode can be looked at as a good example of minority discourse. This chapter will also seek to provide a working definition of Minority discourse and the particular trajectory that it takes in the 'Oxen' passage.

Chapter 2 - Refuting Binary Essentialism - A Political Ideology will draw on the works of such scholars as Michel Foucault, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Frantz Fanon and Vincent J. Cheng for the theoretical framework needed to foreground and illuminate the contexts of the English-Irish discourses on nationality, language and religion in Joyce's *Ulysses*. The chapter will establish that much of the discussions in the 'Oxen of the Sun' are about Joyce's response to the prevalent 'Irish Question' and the various colonial constructs and how he negotiates between the binaries, thereby creating a 'liminal space' within which he articulates and brings about revolutionary innovations in style and linguistic and literary elements. Joyce creates the 'liminal space' by situating himself in the various totemic English styles he parodies.

Chapter 3 - "**An Irish Bull in an English China Shop"- A Critical Reading of the 'Oxen'** will attempt a close textual stylistic reading of the episode, 'Oxen of the Sun' and critically analyze the styles parodied using minority discourse theories as posited by Abdul JanMohammed, David Lloyd and Homi K. Bhaba to establish that the Joycean style in the 'Oxen of the Sun' makes it a minority discourse and that this 'Nativity chapter' in *Ulysses*, can be marked as the seeding ground for the Protean language used in *Finnegans Wake.*

Chapter 4 - “birds of a feather laugh together”- Humour in ‘Oxen’ will look at humour in the chapter “Oxen of the Sun” and at how Joyce uses humour, especially Menippean satire, as a potent vehicle for a political aggrandisation of the literal kind.

Chapter 5 Conclusion- Styles in Oxen of the Sun as Minority Discourse will consolidate the main arguments and the conclusions of each of the preceding chapters to establish that the mosaic of parodied styles in ‘Oxen of the Sun’ is minority discourse.